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160844Z Sep 05

ACTION AF-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AID-00	A-00	CIAE-00	INL-00	DODE-00
	DOEE-00	DS-00	EAP-00	EUR-00	OIGO-00	UTED-00	VC-00
	H-00	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-00	LAB-01	L-00	VCE-00
	M-00	AC-00	NSAE-00	NSCE-00	OIC-00	OIG-00	OMB-00
	PA-00	MCC-00	PER-00	PM-00	GIWI-00	PRS-00	ACE-00
	P-00	SP-00	IRM-00	SSO-00	SS-00	TRSE-00	FMP-00
	BBG-00	R-00	ECA-00	IIP-00	SCRS-00	PMB-00	DSCC-00
	PRM-00	DRL-00	G-00	NFAT-00	SAS-00	SWCI-00	/001W

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FM AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2315
AMEMBASSY ABUJA
AMEMBASSY ACCRA
AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
AMEMBASSY BAMAKO
AMEMBASSY KAMPALA
AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY NIAMEY
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE

UNCLAS NDJAMENA 001414

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR AF, AF/C, DRL, INR, LONDON AND PARIS FOR
AFRICA-WATCHERS
INFO AF/PD (SWESTGATE)

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [OIIP](#) [KPAO](#) [PHUM](#) [CD](#)
SUBJECT: FOUR JOURNALISTS STILL IN PRISON; A FIFTH MENACED
SENSITIVE
REF: NDJAMENA 864, 946

1. (SBU) Summary: Three Chadian journalists remain in prison in N'D after being denied bail in a hearing on Thursday, September 15th. A f had been in prison since early July, was granted temporary release on week. A fifth journalist, arrested and then quickly released, is stil charges and trial. International press freedom groups have kept up ne pressure on the Government of Chad (GOC), including avisit by a Congo journalist-rights lawyer. The Embassy continues its advocacy as well the Ambassador held a second round of visits with Government Minister deteriorating press freedoms, following his remarks in support of a f the Embassy July 4th celebration. End Summary

FOURTH AND FIFTH ARRESTS

2. (SBU) The month of August saw a fourth journalist, the editor of L'Observateur, Sy Koumbo Gali, jailed alongside her coordinating edit Ngaradoumbe. Sy Kombo -- a prominent figure in the Chadian press, cl contact, and the only female editor of a Chadian paper -- received a and a 100,000 CFA fine for publishing an article critical of the Zagh President Idriss Deby. Then in early September, Laisso Bagamla, also was arrested and charged with defamation against a local businesswom temporarily released two days later, and is still awaiting trial. Sa was released last week on bail, but Embassy sources suggest that his final. The three journalists who remain in jail -- Sy Kombo Gali, Mi Garonde Djarma -- were all denied bail in a hearing on Sept. 15th, an court next Thursday, September 22nd, for another hearing. Sources re today's hearing, judges were especially critical of Garounde Djarma, a three-year sentence and is likely to remain in jail even if the oth

INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE

3. (SBU) International pressure on the GOC continued to mount durin A prominent journalist watchdog group, "Journalists in Danger," sent counsel, Mr. Charles Muggaga Mushizi, to Chad for a week-long visit w the GOC. His visit received heavy media coverage, and he made severa appearances, stating that he was "concerned and worried about the dan of press freedoms in Chad." Reporters Without Borders has also been a against the arrests, sending letters to GOC ministers, the presidency media. In addition to the release of Samory and Laisso, the governmen Radio Brakoss, a radio station in southern Chad known for its vocal c government, to re-open starting next week.

EMBASSY ADVOCACY

4. (SBU) Ambassador Wall and Embassy personnel raised the issue of t cabinet ministers. On August 15, Minister of Justice Edouard Ngarta the Ambassador that the Appeals Court would be hearing the cases of t This would represent a chance for their sentences to be reversed. I

call, the Ambassador told the new Communications Minister Houmadji Mo Doumgor that the jailing of the journalist has earned Chad a negative In his initial days as the self-proclaimed "government of combat's" t new Minister was "on message". He explained the arrests of the journ the publication of the photos of the Chadian rebels put the press on opposition and that Sy Kombo had incited ethnic hatred through use of "jandjaweed". Nonetheless, the Minister acknowledged that during th there are steps that can be taken to alleviate the situation. At a we ceremony for a group of 14 journalists the Embassy sent to Cameroon f Minister stated that his government was "embarrassed by the arrests, "it is not within the power of a Minister, even though [Minister] of a former journalist, to interfere in a judicial process to free the j today. In any case," he continued, "if it arises that [the court's] poor, or based on false or irregular pretenses [...], the accused jou the option of having their cases reviewed sooner or later."

PRESSURES INSIDE THE GOC

15. (SBU) Inside GOC circles, pressure to release the journalists ha mounting. President Deby, in a rare TV appearance, was asked about t stated that he was not at all involved, as it was a matter for the co Several prominent members of the ruling MPS spoke out openly about th

the journalists. The new Minister of Human Rights Abderaman Djasnaba August 24 that when he joined the Government two weeks earlier, he ad President to release the journalists immediately. Djasnabaille was would be released at their next court appearances -- a prediction tha He claims the President was upset upon his return from France to find In addition, when we raised the issue with ruling party insiders, the Government had proved its point and was seeking a way out of the situ that Deby would likely use the courts to release the journalists, rat in order to assuage other interests within the Presidency. On Septemb Justice Minister told P/E officer that the three remaining journalist their court appearance. Human rights activists say that the Governmen journalists at the behest of the French Ambassador, whose remarks at celebration had a strong pro-GOC flavor.

COMMENT

16. (SBU) The arrests of the four journalists received massive press throughout the month, especially in the independent media. Even the government newspaper Le Progres has spoken out openly against the arr been giving an unusual level of coverage to Embassy programs and even journalism training in Cameroon. The September 15th court appearance and even some protesters, and sources present at the hearing expresse this is only the beginning -- a warning shot on the government's part as pressure on the GOC mounts in other areas, they will respond with on the media.

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